

Summary Essay Question
9.12 Neurobiology Laboratory
Writing Instructor: Marilee P. Ogren

Write a well-organized, clearly worded essay about 3 pages long that summarizes the most essential information and points of agreement and disagreement presented in the assigned articles. Your task is to *inform your readers* about the central issues, not to persuade them to take a particular viewpoint. Your approach to the material should be objective, not opinionated.

Assume your audience is a group of your peers who have not studied this topic. Do not do any additional reading or research beyond the articles provided. Be sure your paper is understandable to someone who has not read the original articles.

You can include at most, two or three direct quotations. Most of the information from the articles should be reported by paraphrasing the authors' words (see "Using the Language of Your Source Appropriately" from the Mayfield handbook, below). You should document all direct quotations through parenthetical documentation that uses the authors' last name and year of publication (e.g., Lois et al. 2006). Do not add a list of works cited.

This is what is expected of you:

- Extract the most essential information and ideas from each reading.
- Determine how a particular article's information and ideas related to those in the other articles (e.g., support, contradict, supplement).
- Paraphrase the authors' language concisely and accurately but do not copy their words verbatim except in direct quotes.
- Structure the essay logically and coherently, avoiding superficial or random lists of points. Make good use of your introductory and concluding paragraphs, and the topic sentences of the body paragraphs.
- Write in precise, concise, and engaging prose.

Mayfield Electronic Handbook of Technical & Scientific Writing

<http://www.mhhe.com/mayfieldpub/tsw/home.htm>

Section 10.1

Using the Language of Your Source Appropriately

If you use the language of your source, quote the wording exactly. This is called a direct quotation. A direct quotation is either enclosed in [quotation marks](#) or indented on the page. If you omit part of the wording, use an ellipsis (three [periods](#), four if necessary for punctuation to indicate the omission). In any case, several words in succession taken from another source constitute direct quotation and must be [acknowledged](#). Indeed, a single word may constitute a direct quotation if it is a word closely identified with a particular author.

A paraphrase employs source material by restating an idea in an entirely new form that is original in both sentence structure and word choice. Taking the basic structure from a source and substituting a few words is an unacceptable paraphrase and may be construed as plagiarism. Creating a new sentence by merging the wording of two or more sources is also plagiarism.

The following examples illustrate the differences between acceptable paraphrase and plagiarism.

Source Quotation

A grand unified theory has long been the holy grail of physicists. Since ancient times, physicists have sought minimalist explanations of nature. Theories with four basic particles are considered better than theories of ten.

--Alan Lightman, *Ancient Light: Our Changing View of the Universe*

Unacceptable Paraphrase

A grand unified theory has long been the central goal of scientists. Since the dawn of time, men of science have looked for minimalist explanations of natural phenomena. A theory with four elementary particles is considered better than a theory of ten.

In the preceding passage, the writer has merely substituted a few words of his or her own for words in the source. The structure and the overall wording of the sentences, however, are Lightman's. Since the writer has borrowed Lightman's words as well as his ideas, the acknowledgment of Lightman as a source does not prevent this passage from being plagiarism.

Unacceptable Paraphrase

Physicists have long had the grand unified theory as their holy grail. Science always tries to give minimalist explanations for natural phenomena. The best theory is the one with the fewest elements.

The structure of the individual sentences in the preceding passage is somewhat original, but the order of sentences is clearly taken from Light man. In addition, the writer has used several phrases taken directly from the source, such as "minimalist explanations of nature." Borrowing such phrases without enclosing them in quotation marks makes the writer guilty of plagiarism.

Acceptable Paraphrase

Physicists have long sought a grand unified theory, since scientists have always preferred theories with the fewest elements (Lightman 106).

This writer has reproduced much of the meaning of Lightman's passage but in a sentence that is original in structure and word choice. The only major words and phrases taken from Lightman are *grand unified theory*, *theories*, and *physicists*. Such duplication is acceptable, since it would be cumbersome to find synonyms for these basic terms.